SR 400 & SR 365 Corridor Studies
Public Meeting #2 Summary – SR 400 Corridor

March 6, 2008
5:00 - 7:00 PM
Black's Mill Elementary School

Objectives
- Review study purpose and goals
- Present key study findings and recommendations
- Gather input on recommendations
- Discuss next steps

Notification Strategy
Written notification in the form of a postcard was mailed to all stakeholder database entries. An e-mail reminder was also sent to all persons with email addresses listed in the stakeholder database.

News releases were coordinated with Teri Pope at the GDOT Office of Communications. Display advertisements – each publicizing both meetings within the same advertisement – were placed in the following papers on the following dates:

Newspaper	Ad Run Dates
Mundo Hispanico	Feb 14 & 26
Dahlonega Nugget	Feb 13 & 27
Dawson News & Advertiser	Feb 13 & 27
Northeast Georgian	Feb 12 & 26
Gainesville Times	Feb 12 & 26

More than 70 meeting notifications were sent to service providers and organizations throughout the study area accompanied by a GDOT letter asking that they be posted in highly visible locations. These included:
- Public libraries
- Municipal buildings
- Chambers of Commerce
- Division of Children & Family Services offices
- Schools/Colleges
- Churches and places of worship with identified Hispanic ministries (EJ)
- Social services organizations with a focus on serving Hispanic populations (EJ)

Format of Meeting
An open house format with an emphasis on education and receiving public input was used. A Welcome Station was set up to sign in meeting participants and to orient them to the meeting format and expected outcomes. A multi-part Public Meeting Handout was distributed which contained an SR 400 Fact Sheet, a "What we heard from you" and "How can I provide input?" section documenting and summarizing the public involvement input to date, and a Frequently Asked Questions section. Participants were also given a combined Comment Form and Meeting Evaluation Form to complete after visiting the various meeting stations and a postcard to alert them to the new website address for the study.

Stations with display boards were arranged around the meeting room. These stations, which were staffed by project team and consulting team members, provided information on the following project elements:
- Meeting purpose
- Summary and use of public involvement input received to date

- Summary of existing and future conditions
- Scenario performance for each alternative studied
- Recommended scenario and next steps

A Comments Station was also set up with tables, seating, pens, and a comment box to allow participants to complete Meeting Evaluation and Comment Forms.

Meeting Attendance
A total of 70 individuals signed in.

Project Team Attendees
Olen Daelhousen, ARCADIS
Maureen Gresham, ARCADIS
Tim Preece, ARCADIS
Bill Cantrell, GA Department of Transportation
Tim Kassa, GA Department of Transportation
Robert Mahoney, GA Department of Transportation
Ulysses Mitchell, GA Department of Transportation
Casie Hughes, Sycamore Consulting, Inc.
Jen Price, Sycamore Consulting, Inc.
Jay Pease, PBS&J

Summary of Comment Forms

Meeting participants were given a Comment Form with instructions for providing opinions on the preferred improvement scenario for SR 400. Study goals and objectives were presented in a table and participants were asked to provide feedback on whether the preferred improvement scenario would meet the objectives associated with each goal. Space was also provided on the form for additional comments. A total of 25 responses were received. The following is a summary of the responses received

Goals	Objectives	Scenario: 8-Lane Freeway with Managed Lanes		
		YES this scenario does meet the objectives for this goal	**NO** this scenario does not meet the objectives for this goal	**Comments**
Goal 1 – Improve Safety	Reduce potential for vehicular conflicts	32	1	▪ Just on 400? Or on surrounding streets? ▪ Where? On 400? Yes ▪ On surface streets? No
	Increase safe crossings for bicyclists and pedestrians	12	1	▪ Did not see how; maybe I missed it ▪ Pedestrians? Are there any still?
Goal 2 – Increase Mobility	Reduce corridor trip times	16	2	▪ Seems same as now ▪ Only if 8 lanes continue south ▪ Maybe
	Reduce system-wide hours of delay	16	3	▪ Maybe ▪ Not possible unless Hwy 9 is upgraded ▪ Lane reduction always causes delays
	Decrease corridor mileage operating at unacceptable levels of service	14	3	

Goal 3 – Better Manage Access	Reduce corridor access points	18	0	▪ Not always a good thing for local traffic ▪ Causes the need to enhance surface roads ▪ Convenience to get to the other side of 400? ▪ Too reduced
	Increase connectivity	13	3	▪ Separates and splits local access ▪ Not clear – to what, where?
	Increase average speed in congested conditions	12	3	▪ Not on local surface streets
Goal 4 – Encourage transportation best practices	Minimize environmental impacts	10	4	▪ Requires a lot of additional construction ▪ Larger impact?
	Maximize benefit/cost relationship	11	1	▪ No cost info provided ▪ Impossible to say without cost info
	Promote appropriate land use decision-making	10	3	

Respondents were asked to offer **additional comments** regarding study goals, objectives, and the preferred improvement scenario. Responses provided are presented below.

- I don't think Managed Lanes need to be in the mix
- Our interest is in the proposal to extend 400 on Long Branch Rd. to Highway 52. We live in Oakdale Estates off on Long Branch Rd. We are against this proposal as current road is capable of handling traffic. We would much rather see Highway 60 four-laned from the present end of 400 on into Dahlonega. This could be done when the current project of four-laning 60 from Gainesville to end of 400. Four-laning Long Branch endangers streams flowing into the Chestatee and then Lake Lanier. However, if you insist on proceeding with the four-laning of Long Branch, we hope that you will consider constructing berms and/or sound walls to reduce traffice noise and protect existing subdivisions from traffic hazards.
- Our main concern is ingress/egress from commercial properties during the construction process, especially. Impact upon businesses is a factor that should be considered and addressed during evaluation.
- At Lumpkin Campground and SR 53 improvements have been made. However, the traffic was changed and not changed back – on Sundays. The light used to "trip" change when a car coming to Lumpkin Campground wanted to cross 53. Now we have to wait, like the road was still busy during the week.
- It would have been informative to see basis for growth projections

Summary of Meeting Evaluation Forms

Meeting participants were given a meeting evaluation form. The following are responses received. A total of 25 responses were received.

1) How would you rate this meeting overall?

Response	# Responses
Very Good	2
Good	17
Average	6
Poor	0
Very Poor	0
N/A	0

2) Are the presentations and display boards informative and easy to understand? If not, please explain.

Response	# Responses
Yes	21
No	1
N/A	2

Common Explanations & Responses
- Maps too small; need to be one per poster board
- Schematics/models/pictures would be helpful
- Easy to understand but difficult to read
- No one knows for sure if 400 is going up or under 53 or Dawson Forest

3) Has the study team been helpful in answering your questions? If not, please explain.

Response	# Responses
Yes	21
No	0
N/A	2

Common Explanations & Responses
- One person says it'll take 10-20 some years, and another person says we're starting very soon
- Never suggested going around the interchange on vacant land; no consideration on the effect of existing commercial and possible future commercial development

4) What did you like most about the meeting?
- Seeing where proposed interchanges will be
- Helpful explanations, openness and sharing of information, and willingness to listen
- Informal nature easy to get questions answered
- Good information
- To know that 400 is on the drawing board for expansion (design improvements) in the "near" future
- The proposal to make GA 400 limited access to highway 60
- Staff were helpful; handouts and maps help to understand growth coming our way
- Clear presentation of info and availability of info online
- The opportunity to participate and to comment on a subject which is VERY important to this area
- Too little too late

- Pros and cons put project in perspective
- Finding future plans for north GA 400
- The overall concepts of limited access

5) In what areas do you feel the meeting could have been improved?
   - Possible timelines could provide more information to help understand total impact
   - Bad seating for filling out papers
   - Maps and visuals – easier to read (most people are visual learners)
   - Models, pictures, overhead projections (of proposed lanes)
   - Better or quantified design for individual intersections
   - It's all smoke and mirrors
   - Larger map display (like first meeting) and larger visuals
   - More formal presentation with opportunity for Q&A
   - Present other options with the pluses and minuses

6) Regarding what you have learned, how would you rate the following statements?

I learned new information

1	Strongly Agree	10
2	Agree	8
3	Neither Agree nor Disagree	2
4	Disagree	0
5	Strongly Disagree	1

One respondent just checked "I learned new information" but did not record a number.

I was given an opportunity to provide input.

1	Strongly Agree	6
2	Agree	12
3	Neither Agree nor Disagree	3
4	Disagree	0
5	Strongly Disagree	0

One respondent just checked "I was given an opportunity to provide input" but did not record a number.

7) How did you find out about tonight's meeting?
   - Newspaper/Newspaper article (10)
   - Postcard in the mail (8)
   - Word of Mouth (3)
   - Local home builders association (2)
   - Email (2)
   - Media (news)

8) Please provide any additional comments on any aspect of the SR 400 & SR 365 Corridor Studies:
   - I feel like information was guided to substantiate a conclusion already determined
   - Please note in Dawson County that Grant Road west is privately owned and is only a prescriptive easement of the county
   - Where and when is the funding coming? Will project be outdated before funding arrives?
   - Please upgrade highway with at least a center turn lane BEFORE there is work on SR 400. There is no other route around 400!

- I really like the traffic management cameras at the 400-Windward Exit. Please install more!
- I would like to see SR400 stay a highway but be safe. With all the development this could be a mess to reach all the existing retail stores and restaurants easily.
- Please make 400 limited access to 60 – stop curb cuts now so it will not be too costly to get this project done ASAP. No more traffic lights.
- Further explore impact on commercial properties and businesses
- I feel the GDOT has discriminated against Dawson County for the past 50 years
- Please add funding to support these plans
- Need to know SR400 expanded stuffy from McFarland north to this study @ Browns Bridge
- Remove the lights, limit access, put in interchanges, widen to six lanes minimum
- Please provide a traffic light at the entrance to the outlet mall on Ga. 400
- The intersection of 53 and 400 needs to be restudied and all options presented to the public
- Article in Gainesville Times re: meeting location/time was incorrect

Use of Comments in the Study Process

The comments gathered at the public meeting are being used in various ways to aid the study team. The information gathered from the public is being provided to the study Technical Advisory Committee which consists of local, regional, and state agency staff representatives in the areas of planning, public works, and engineering as well as representatives of the schools and major employers in the corridor. The TAC has used feedback to further guide their recommendations for improvements to be considered in the corridor. All operational comments were compiled in a memorandum provided to GDOT District 1 for review and consideration for any short term solutions to identified issues in the corridor. The study team has used this input to gain a better local understanding of the travel patterns and issues in the corridor. The study team also used the information as input to refine the transportation model and as guidance in the development of any infrastructure or policy improvements necessary to ensure efficient operation of the corridor into the future. In this final public input opportunity, the feedback from the public will be used to gauge support for the recommended improvement scenarios.

Overall Evaluation of Round II Meetings

Evaluation of the effectiveness of public involvement efforts is a key aspect in documenting the level of public involvement achieved. This synopsis uses the performance criteria identified in the Public Involvement Plan for this study (meeting attendance and participant feedback, which includes comments received and the types of comments received) to assess the effectiveness of the meeting. The written comments received via the standard meeting evaluation form distributed at the workshops are the basis for analysis.

Since public notification efforts were combined for both the SR 400 and SR 365 corridors, this synopsis examines the effectiveness of both meetings, combined. Recommendations for improvements are also included.

<u>Meeting Attendance</u>
A combined total of 135 people signed-in at the SR 400 and SR 365 public meetings held on March 4 and March 6, 2008. Of these individuals, 83 were contacts who had not attended the previous round of public meetings for either corridor. The local newspapers prove to be the most effective means for informing the public, followed closely by those receiving the postcard notification and by word of mouth.
Overall, meeting attendance was very good.

<u>Participant Feedback</u>
Comments Received (Meeting Evaluation Forms)

Of the 135 attendees, 46 (approximately 34%) submitted meeting evaluation forms. The standard return rate of 25% was greatly exceeded. This could be due to public interest in the project and a desire to "weigh-in" on the recommended scenarios presented for the corridors. High return rate of meeting evaluation forms could also be due to the type of meeting that was held. Open houses and other interactive meetings where participation is encouraged can translate into a greater willingness for people to participate overall, meeting evaluations included.

Types of Comments Received (Meeting Evaluation Forms)
Meeting attendees were asked to weigh in on the recommended scenario for each corridor and its ability to meet the objectives and goals for the study. For each scenario in both corridors, the majority of respondents felt that the recommended scenarios to meet the goals and objectives of the study. People were also asked to provide any additional comments on any aspect of the study. These comments varied across many topics including concerns for businesses and commercial growth on SR 400 to issues of safety on SR 365.

Overall, the amount of participant feedback received greatly exceeded expectations.

Recommendations

1. Provide information regarding the change of the study website to all SR 365 contacts as well as to stakeholders who did not attend the SR 400 meeting. The postcard was made available to SR 400 meeting attendees only and since, in the days following public meetings, it is expected that people may check the study website. It would be a good idea to ensure that everyone is aware of the change.
2. At the conclusion of the study, it would be a good idea to send a postcard to all database entries that directs them to the website or to the GDOT office where they can review the final report.